

Sinclair Broadcast Group's recent actions have illustrated the dangers to localism caused by media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at Sinclair's fake "News Central," it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive and genuine news about issues that matter.

Viacom also recently announced that its cable stations, including Comedy Central, VH1 and MTV, would not accept independent political ads. Viacom argues that the issues are adequately discussed on its other properties, including CBS, which recently made a political decision not to air a 60 Minutes story on forged documents used to make the case for war on Iraq.

Both Viacom and Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard.

Thank you.